

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
ACTION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2005**

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present, Commissioners: Gibson, Parsons, Frautschi, Dickenson, Long, Wozniak, Horton

Absent, Commissioners: None

Present, Staff: Community Development Director Ewing (CDD), Principal Planner de Melo (PP), Deputy City Attorney Zafferano (DCA), Recording Secretary Flores (RS)

**2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS:**

**With the consent of the Commission, Item 7A was moved to precede Item 6A.**

**3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments):                      None**

**4. CONSENT CALENDAR:**

**4A. Minutes of 1/4/05 Planning Commission Meeting**

**Corrections: Item 6A, C Wozniak voted "Aye" and Chair Gibson voted "Noe" on the item.**

**Item 6A, Page 4, third line under C Frautschi's comments should indicate "DTSP" rather than DSP.**

**Motion by C Frautschi, seconded by C Dickenson, to accept the Minutes of January 4, 2005 with the two corrections as noted.**

**Ayes:                      Frautschi, Dickenson, Long, Horton, Wozniak, Parsons, Gibson**

**Noes:                      None**

**Motion passed 7/0**

**5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**5A. PUBLIC HEARING – 2013 Mezes Avenue**

To consider a Single Family Design Review to allow construction of a two-story addition to the existing single family dwelling.

(Appl. No. 2004-0048)

APN: 044-062-340; Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301(e), Class 1

Applicant/Owner: Faith and Charles Velschow

CDD Ewing summarized the staff report, recommending project approval with the conditions as attached, and answered questions from the Commission.

Charles Velschow, applicant, explained that the reason for the addition is the arrival of a third child in the family.

Chair Gibson opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

**MOTION: By VC Parsons, seconded by C Dickenson, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed.**

For the record, Commissioners Frautschi, Long and Parsons each stated that they had visited the site.

**MOTION: By C Frautschi, seconded by C Long, approving a Single-Family Design for 2013 Mezes Avenue with appended Exhibit A, Conditions of Project Approval.**

**(Appl. No. 2004-0048)**

**Ayes: Frautschi, Long, Dickenson, Horton, Wozniak, Parsons, Gibson**

**Noes: None**

**Motion passed 7/0**

Chair Gibson noted that the item may be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

## **5B. PUBLIC HEARING – 2702 Ponce Avenue**

To consider a Single Family Design Review to add 1,978 square feet to the first and second floor of the existing single family residence for a total of 3,239 square feet that is below the zoning district permitted 3,500 square feet for this site.

(Appl. No. 2004-0065)

APN: 044-033-050; Zoned: R-1B (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301, Class 1(e)(1)(2a & b)

Applicant/Owner: Kevin Firenze

PP de Melo summarized the staff report, recommending project approval subject to the attached conditions, and answered questions from the Commission.

Kevin Firenze, owner, explained that the reason for the expansion is the addition of twin daughters to the family. C Frautschi complimented the owner on the design.

Chair Gibson opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

**MOTION: By VC Parsons, seconded by C Dickenson, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed.**

C Long commented that he hopes the applicants will continue their present landscaping efforts in the new project and that it appeared to him that the gray that was presented in the color board may not be the best color for the roof, but that it is entirely their decision and he supported it as is.

C Frautschi thanked the applicant for putting a 2-car garage on his property when it wasn't really required, adding that it will then avoid having the truck parked in the front yard illegally.

**MOTION: By C Frautschi, seconded by VC Parsons, approving a Single-Family Design for 2702 Ponce Avenue with appended Exhibit A, Conditions of Project Approval.**

**(Appl. No. 2004-0065)**

**Ayes: Frautschi, Parsons, Dickenson, Long Horton, Wozniak, Gibson**

**Noes: None**

**Motion passed 7/0**

Chair Gibson noted that the item may be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

**With consensus of the Commission, Item 7A, was moved to this point in the meeting.**

**7A. Design Review – Wells Fargo Corporate Properties – 1045 Ralston Avenue**

**Project Description: Design Review Approval to allow the addition to the Wells Fargo Bank building of two roof equipment shelters and related signage, colors and materials. (Continued from 1/4/05 meeting.)**

CDD Ewing summarized the staff report, which provided three alternatives submitted by the applicant for the Commission's review and discussion.

Steve Lewis, Lewis Architects, addressed the Commissioners, referring them to photographs of story poles showing the configuration if condensers were placed on Ralston, noting that is a pretty substantial area and would be quite problematic. In response to the Commission's concerns, they altered the original scheme to scale it down and provided another scheme with both units on the Twin Pines side of the building. He answered questions from C Long and C Wozniak regarding the height and material for screening if condensers were placed on Ralston, and the noise levels of the proposed units. He commented that Wells Fargo is amenable to following through with landscaping at the request of the Commission, it would not be feasible to place the units on the City Hall side of the building since the mechanical the mechanical room is on the opposite side of the building, and the lights on the Ralston side can be redirected. With the proposed roof locations on the west side of the building, they tried to detail it with the "Victorian theme." It is not a Victorian building but they tried to put those elements in to comply with that theme and reiterated that they have been working with the Planning Department for nearly a year.

C Wozniak preferred Alt. 2 as she did not feel it would be that visible from the street. Alt. 3 was her second choice; she believed traffic noise on Ralston was much noisier than the unit would be during the day and that it would not be too much of an eye sore.

C Dickenson believed that Alt. 3 would be too obnoxious and that Alt. 2 would be much too massive and lopsided on that side. He noted that now it is screened by trees but once City Hall is open they do not know what will happen with the trees. He would vote for Alt. 1—putting it over the doors but pushed into the roof as far as it can go and following the roofline.

C Long stated that he could not accept anything put on to the top of the building for either the front or the rear façade. He felt that what little architectural value the building has is well hidden within the tree-strewn Twin Pines area and could not see how it would enhance the look of the building. He sees putting it on the ground as being an improvement aesthetically if it is done halfway right; he was in favor of trying to trench as deep as possible and put the 3' to 3-1/2-foot-tall units outside on the Ralston side with nice lattice work around the units that allows airflow around the units and then a vine or series of vines along the lattice. His vote would be for Alt. 3.

C Horton: preferred Alt. 2 because, while it can be perceived as more massive, it is more linear and in keeping with the "linearity" of the whole building. She would vote for 2, but agreed with C Long that the area in front of the building is presently so horrible that 3 would not be bad either.

C Frautschi stated that his preference is Alt. 3, however, he felt there were some problems with the efficiency and the noise. He agreed that Ralston is not a real quiet area but at nighttime the units would be turned down and noise would not be that much of an issue. He looked at it as an opportunity to be creative – suggested perhaps some type of pseudo gazebo that the condensers are incorporated into so that it is actually part of the landscape instead of imposing on the site. He could go with Alt. 2 with slight modification – if a false roof was continued on the same line as the unit so that it encompassed the whole roof.

VC Parsons stated that his preference would be Alt. 2 with a modified roof line that mimics what is on the building now with a heavy fascia and extended eaves. He added that Alt. 3 has less impact on the look of the structure but he did not like the idea of having more utilities outside, which would mean there has to be a path to it so that the landscaping will get beaten up by contractors when they're working on it. His least favorite design would be the single units. His second choice would be putting it

outside on the end of the building but he would not suggest any kind of trellis effect; he would want to see a structure with permanent louvers; something that looks like a permanent piece of equipment, not a flimsy fence because every time someone goes in there it will get damaged. He would want to see more detail on the designs for Alt. 2 or 3.

Chair Gibson stated that Alt. 2 was his first choice, Alt. 1 was his second choice, and he did not like Alt. 3 at all because he did not like the idea of using scarce territory that can be landscaped for this equipment.

CDD Ewing calculated the Commissioners' preferences as: Four votes for Alt. 2, two votes for Alt. 3, and one vote for Alt. 1. VC Parsons stated that his preference would be to have the applicant come back with a more detailed design for Alt. 2 as well as plans for landscaping and signage. Mr. Lewis suggested that they center a sign over the doorways, or that it could be mounted on the new construction. He stated that he is not proposing to add a sign on the Sixth Avenue side. CDD Ewing proposed that staff will work with the applicant and bring back a scheme for layout number 2 with some additional detailing of a roof plan for the enclosure and also request a landscape plan for the site and add a condition regarding the parking lot lighting. As discussed at the previous meeting, C Long proposed asking the building owner if they are amenable to some sort of proposal to paint or shingle over the unfinished concrete fascia underneath the ATM's. Mr. Lewis agreed that this could be explored with Wells Fargo but it might be beyond the cost of the overall project. He added that he would like to have direction from the Commission before seeking a landscape plan and would like to keep it as a separate issue if possible.

After further discussion of design, landscape, and noise issues, CDD Ewing suggested that he would like to have direction for staff to bring back a resolution and the applicant to bring back a final plan for the enclosure. The resolution could include a requirement that, prior to building permits being issued, the parking lot lighting be directed more downward within the site without any spillover, that the finish of the retaining wall be shown on the revised plans to be returned by the architect, and that, prior to the issuance of building permits for the project, a landscape plan has been reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. In that way, any dialogues that Wells Fargo's landscape architect might want to have with staff or any Commissioner could be arranged but it would come back to the Commission for final approval before building permits are issued. A condition could also be added to indicate that installed units will be subject to any future noise ordinance adopted by the City.

**MOTION: By VC Parsons, seconded by C Long, that staff return a revised Resolution to the Commission with the applicant's revised design for the roof modifications of Alternate 2, and the addition of conditions to require: 1) modification of the parking lot lighting so it is more down-directed; 2) a proposal for a finish for the retaining wall on the Sixth Avenue side of the building; 3) a landscape plan for approval prior to the issuance of a building permit; and 3) that the installed units will be subject to any future Noise Ordinance adopted by the City.**

**Ayes: Parsons, Long, Dickenson, Frautschi, Horton, Wozniak, Gibson**

**Noes: None**

**Motion passed 7/0**

**5C. PUBLIC HEARING – Zoning Code Amendment – Single Family Residential Parking Standards**

To consider revisions to Sections 2.16, 8.1.4, and 8.3.1(e) of the City of Belmont Zoning Code, amending the definition of a "bedroom" and threshold for requiring a parking upgrade (to conform with the standard of two garage spaces and two additional spaces) for single family residential projects.

(Appl. No. 2004-0079) CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15308 - Actions of Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of the Environment. Applicant: City of Belmont (Continued from 1/4/05 Planning Commission Hearing)

PP de Melo summarized the staff report. To clarify the last column of the table in Attachment II, he pointed out that there were 16 two-car garages that met the 20 x 20 standard and 24 that did not. In his analysis, the 24 that did not were not single-car garages or no-car garages, they just did not meet the 20 x 20 standards, and probably better than half of the 24 met the 17' x 18' requirement.

Chair Gibson opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

**MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Long, to close the public hearing. Motion passed.**

C Frautschi stated that the table in Attachment II confirmed for him that what they are trying to do is definitely the right thing to do and that they are

going in the right direction. His preference would be language that states that any house that is 3,000 square feet needs a 2-car covered garage. Referring to page 3 of the staff report, Section 2.16, Bedroom, he suggested changing the last sentence to read "Dens, studies, *offices, libraries*, and other similar rooms..."

C Wozniak concurred but was concerned that they are focusing on bedrooms because they think more bedrooms would perhaps net more cars that need to be parked and covered, but they are really talking about more space.

C Long felt that defining a bedroom makes sense, but was concerned that fees for a single-family Design Review and Variance are roughly \$14,000 or 2% of the value of the house just to get an extra bedroom that they are now saying is verboten. He thinks the intention and execution are fantastic but does not think they are solving what he sees as their goals of fewer cars on the street, less paving in the front of yards and autos in garages and out of sight, adding that he would not be able to support the resolution.

Chair Gibson stated that he has stood before the Council and said that if there are too many cars on the street, if the demand exceeds the supply because the price is too low, they need to regulate or charge for parking. He added that he never liked the tying of bedrooms to parking and was prepared to abstain on this issue for that reason.

VC Parsons felt that they have struggled with this issue for a long time and it's been the definition of a bedroom and addition of bedrooms that has caused the additional cars. He added that whenever a room can be added where someone can sleep in it they end up getting more and more cars and expects that this will get worse with the expected increase in secondary units. He also believed that their direction from Council was to find a way to try to resolve this problem and that managing a parking program would probably be more expensive and would be something that would have to be approved by the voters. He felt staff had done a good job on this and could support it the way it is written or with the addition of C Frautschi's two suggested words.

C Wozniak stated her support of the ordinance and thought it was well written. She felt that the previous ordinance took all of the meat out of the original City ordinance and that this is an attempt to put some teeth back in and bring it back to where the City codes are, and also believes it is a safety issue in Belmont. She reiterated her concern about the focus on bedrooms.



C Long stated he has a hard time making the connection that more bedrooms would yield more cars and a harder time thinking that this ordinance will not do more damage than help. He wants to make Belmont a better place to live and wants people who spend \$700,000 or more on a house to be able to add another bedroom if it looks good and functions well. He believes the solution for parking is to have some guidelines along with a parking plan by site. He agreed that there are some sites in the list that should not have been approved based on the parking but did not believe that this is the right strategy to go about fighting the problem properties.

C Horton stated that she did not believe that someone who spent \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 for a house would like to drive down a street littered with cars. She believed there are the issues of trying to clean things up and safety, and that adding a bedroom or two is often just part of a major expansion.

C Long reiterated that the issue is removal of cars from the street and this to him is not the most direct way to do it, and that Chair Gibson's earlier suggestion is a far more correct way of accomplishing the same goal. He thinks the expense of \$14,000 in total fees to go through the Variance process and a lot of uncertainty is an onerous thing to put Belmont residents through and will make Belmont's reputation worse.

CDD Ewing stated that the Commission needs to consider two issues:

- Are the 600 sq.ft. and 3,000 sq.ft. thresholds the right thresholds? They will capture a tremendous number of projects.
- Are they overlapping regulations with bedrooms and space? He believes they are, but noted that the Commission may want to sit with that for a year or two before they give it up.

C Parsons added that he did not see any problem with redundancy and there is always the option that, if they see that they've made a mistake, they can amend it next year.

**MOTION:** By C Frautschi, seconded by VC Parsons, approving the Resolution recommending to the City Council amendments to Sections 2.16 (Definitions of Bedroom), 8.1.4 (Parking – Scope of Regulations), and 8.3.1 (E) (Design Standards – Parking Areas) of Belmont Zoning Ordinance Number 360 for Single-Family Residential Parking Standards, with the deletion of the parenthetical language in Section 8.1.4, second bullet, and with removal of the word "similar" in the definition of Bedroom.

**Aye:** Frautschi, Parsons, Horton, Wozniak,

**Noes:** Dickenson, Long

**Abstain:** Gibson, for the reasons stated earlier.

**Motion passed 4/2/1**

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### **6A Priority Calendar – Spring 2005**

CDD Ewing reviewed the staff report and answered questions from the Commission. He further explained that the Commission will be asked to prioritize the one new proposal (Administrative Code Enforcement Procedures), the items that are listed on Page 4 as below-the-line topics, and any additional ideas they propose at the meeting. Staff will create a ballot listing those items and then they will vote; nothing drops off of the list but the priorities are added up and communicated to the Council. There is the assumption that anything that was already identified will remain on the Priority Calendar and will be the first group to be worked on.

Commissioners' suggestions for additions to the list and CDD Ewing's comments were as follows:

C Frautschi:

- Under-grounding of the power lines on Old County Road. CDD Ewing stated that this is a Public Works Department project and they are working with PG&E.
- The Plaza Park; it should be a package deal with the under-grounding. CDD Ewing stated that ownership of the site was a question Council has looked into and said that they do not have a million dollars to do that park at this time. He added that it is a Parks and Recreation Project, not Community Development.

VC Parsons:

- A project that would add some kind of life to the train station. CDD Ewing commented that that would mesh well with a grant that SamTrans received that would involve Belmont, San Carlos and Redwood City around the train stations; each station and environs is going to receive about \$35,000 for planning. SamTrans would be working with the communities in hiring consultants, designers, and landscape architect firms, and holding community meetings at the local level to develop plans for land use and

other street improvements around train stations. He suggested calling it Downtown Street Improvement Planning

C Horton:

- A Design Criteria or Guidelines.

C Wozniak:

- Parking Code as regard to lights and parking lot screening.
- Safe Routes to Schools.

C Dickenson:

- Would like to see more planning put into the process of developing safe routes for schools and assumed the Public Works Department would appreciate any input the Commission could give them.
- Solar issues.

C Long:

- Historic Preservation and Inventory. He stated that the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance is not in compliance with what the State requires and has lapsed or is expired. He suggested that Michael Gavalia and his wife who are experts in the field, be contacted.
- Development of a way to point out exceptional commercial properties—properties that are maintained well and where it's done right—perhaps with a plaque recognizing that the property is one of the best in Belmont.

C Wozniak:

- A kiosk with a tour guide to Belmont, including historic sites.

CDD Ewing stated that staff will 1) bring these suggestions back in the form of project descriptions in a ballot format, and 2) explore with the City Manager how to convey their interest and support of projects that are not Community Development projects.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS**

**7A. Design Review – Wells Fargo Corporate Properties – 1045 Ralston Avenue**

**This item was discussed after Item 5B above.**

**8. REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES AND COMMENTS**

C Horton reported that the Forum Meeting would be held at the Little Fox Theatre on Broadway from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on the following evening.

C Wozniak asked if the developer sign in front of the Walgreen's parking lot and a similar sign on Davey Glenn and El Camino are going to stay there forever. CDD Ewing replied that they are allowed to have them but there is a limit as to how long.

C Wozniak asked if anyone else had received an email about a Belmont politics website that was sent to the Planning Commission. She went to the link and it was pretty much nothing there. There were no responses in the affirmative.

C Long asked if the City signs are up to code. CDD Ewing responded that public service signs like that are permitted and exempted in the code.

C Frautschi expressed his concern about what he thought was a Public Works policy of draining fire hydrants into the gutter and suggested that they pump that water into a tanker truck and then use it for watering trees, etc. CDD Ewing informed him that it is the Water District that does the draining and agreed to give him the name of a Water District staff member he could contact.

PP de Melo apologized that the Safeway Code Compliance update was left off of the agenda, adding that the parking lot trees should be installed within the next two to three weeks, they're still working on the remote control for the gate, and the store manager and Mendoza Cart Service have been made aware of the proliferation of carts in the area that was mentioned at the last meeting.

Regarding Arco, PP de Melo noted that the landscaping and bench are installed. He did an inspection that day and found one tree that was required as part of the plan that was not installed. The tree will be installed and Public Works was scheduled to do their walk-through the following day. He will check on the plantings along the Granada Street entrance and the back of the bench, which was reported as being loose.

C Dickenson asked if Kirk Buckman had forwarded the information to PP de Melo about the lottery sign that is on private property. PP de Melo replied that he had, and was in the process of doing research to see if State Code preempts local government from having any regulation of California State Lottery signs, and will provide that information in two weeks.

**9. PLANNING COMMISSION LIAISON TO CITY COUNCIL  
MEETING OF TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2005**

Liaison: Commissioner Frautschi

Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Long

**10. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. to a Regular Meeting at 7:00 p.m. on February 15, 2005 at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

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Craig A. Ewing, AICP

Planning Commission Secretary

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*in the Community Development Department*

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